

Does genetics pay in practice?

Dairy farmers: Paul and Lisa Mumford

Region: Gippsland, Victoria

Topic: ImProving Herds



The high genetic merit cows in Paul and Lisa Mumford's herd contribute \$282 more profit per cow every year than their lower genetic merit herd-mates.

This is the finding of an analysis conducted by the Gardiner Dairy Foundation funded ImProving Herds project, and presented at the Won Wron Focus Farm open day in September. The Mumfords' herd is one of a few in the world to undergo a rigorous comparison of cows of different genetic merit drawing upon a long history of herd recording and detailed farm and financial performance records.

With a shared passion for breeding Jerseys, Paul, Lisa and their sharefarmer Aaron Thomas have built the genetics of the herd (Gelbeado Park Jerseys) to rank number six in Australia for Balanced Performance Index (BPI), DataGene's measure of genetic merit for profit in Australian dairy herds.

Being a GippsDairy Focus Farm has led Paul, Lisa and Aaron to question every aspect of the farm business, including whether their investment in genetics is a profitable one.

"I get a lot of enjoyment out of my breeding program, but we need to run a profitable business and when finances are tight, we look closely at every aspect of the business," Paul said.

The analysis drew upon detailed records kept by the Mumfords over many years. It combined cow records including herd tests, mating and health records with farm financial and physical data. Using historical data, the herd



The high genetic merit cows in Paul Mumford's herd contribute \$282 more profit every year than their lower genetic merit herd-mates.



was split into a high and a low genetic merit group based on each cow's BPI.

Cows in the higher genetic merit group had higher feed costs, but this was easily compensated for by increased milk income and lower replacement rearing costs. Some costs, such as pregnancy testing were similar between the high and low genetic merit groups.

Cows in the high genetic merit group produced more milk (L), fat (kg) and protein (kg) each year. Their inter-calving interval was a month shorter and they lasted 13 months longer in the herd than their lower genetic merit herd mates. There was no difference in their lactation length.

Paul said the results gave him confidence in his breeding choices.

"It's great to know that high genetic merit cows are more profitable, even in seasons with challenging weather and milk price. The Focus Farm has helped us to lift pasture consumption so we can expect even more profitable returns from our high genetic merit cows when seasonal conditions improve," Paul said.

Michelle Axford, from the ImProving Herds Project, said the Mumfords' results demonstrated that the BPI is an effective reflection of an animal's genetic merit for profitability in Australian dairy herds.

"The BPI is based on Australian farmers' breeding priorities, cow performance under Australian conditions and world leading science. And now we have the confirmation that it works on farm," she said.

"The easiest way to use the BPI in your breeding program is to use the Good Bulls app or look for bulls that carry the Good Bulls logo.

"There are hundreds of bulls on the market in Australia that meet the Good Bulls criteria, and they are available in every price range. Choose bulls that meet your own breeding priorities but always check they carry the Good Bulls icon."

ImProving Herds is a 3-year project to analyse the contribution of herd improvement to dairy business profitability. It includes an analysis of the contribution of genetics to profit on 25 focus farms. Funded by the Gardiner Dairy Foundation, the project is a collaboration of DataGene, the Victorian Government, Holstein Australia, Dairy Australia and the National Herd Improvement Association of Australia.

For more information contact: Michelle Axford, ImProving Herds, 0427 573 330, email maxford@datagene.com.au.

CONTACT US

ABN: 78 613 579 614

DataGene Limited, AgriBio, 5 Ring Road,
La Trobe University, Bundoora Victoria 3083



email: enquiries@datagene.com.au



www.datagene.com.au



T (03) 9032 7191



Disclaimer: DataGene is an independent and industry-owned organisation responsible for driving genetic gain and herd improvement in the Australian dairy industry and is an initiative of Dairy Australia and industry. This report is published for your information only. It is published with due care and attention to accuracy, but DataGene accepts no liability, if, for any reason, the information is inaccurate, incomplete or out of date whether negligent or otherwise. Copyright © DataGene Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

December 2017